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A SERMON

Preached before the

KING,

AT

WHITE-HALL, *July* 30. 1676.

By *John Meriton*, M. A. Chaplain to the Right Honourable HENRY, Earl of *Arlington*, Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Houshold.

Printed by His Majesty's special Command.

LONDON,
Printed for *Simon Miller*, at the Star at the West-end of St. *Paul's*. 1677.

MATTH. iii. 8, 9.

Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

And think not to ſay within your ſelves, We have Abraham to our Father; for I ſay unto you, that God is able of theſe ſtones, to raiſe up children unto Abraham.

THeſe words were ſpoken to the Phariſees and Sadduces, who were the great Zealots of the Jewiſh Church; eſpecially the Phariſees, whom Saint *Paul* calls αἵρεσιν ἀκριβεστάτην, the moſt ſtrait Sect amongſt the Jews, *Act.* 26.5. Which knew me from the beginning (if they would teſtifie) that after the moſt ſtrait Sect of our Religion, I lived a Phariſee. Theſe were zealous and punctual

ctual in the obſervation of the Law of Circumciſion, and all other Rites and Ceremonies inſtituted of God by *Moſes*: under which for a time, were contained the Myſteries of true Religion and Godlineſs; *Heb.* 9. 9, 10. which was a figure for the time then preſent, in which were offered both gifts and ſacrifices for ſin; which could not make him that did that ſervice perfect, as pertaining to the Conſcience: Which ſtood in meats and drinks, and divers waſhings and carnal Ordinances; impoſed on them only until the time of Reformation. In which Inſtitutions conſiſted the external Profeſſion and Form of true Religion, and outward Communion with the viſible Church, until the coming of Chriſt in the Fleſh: but by a blind zeal for the Form, without the Power of Godlineſs, the Phariſees and Sadducees thought themſelves privileged againſt the wrath menaced by the Baptiſt; which contained a Prophecy of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and other great calamities then approaching to the Jews under *Titus* and *Veſpatian*, and alſo the terrour of eternal puniſhment in the damnation of Hell. The multitude came and were baptized of him in *Jordan*, confeſſing their ſins: but theſe righteous in their own eyes

eyes had no ſins to confeſs, and came only to his Baptiſm out of a vain curioſity to ſee and cenſure; deriding rather than believing that wrath they were warned to flee from; reaſoning (as is evident from the Baptiſt's words in the Text,) We are zealous of the Law of Circumciſion, and all things enjoyned us of God by *Moſes*, and have *Abraham* to our Father: Tuſh, God cannot deſtroy us, being righteous; nor according to the Oath which he ſware to *Abraham* and his Seed for ever: but with *Ixion* in the Fable, they embraced a Cloud inſtead of *Juno*; whilſt they thought they had found the cleareſt and the brighteſt truth, it proved but a Cloud of palpable errour and darkneſs. For the Baptiſt accuſes their Righteouſneſs of inſufficiency, admoniſhes them to repent, and upbraids their vain oſtentation, and fruitleſs boaſting of ſucceſſion from *Abraham*; from whoſe faith and vertue they were ſo far degenerated, as they were more like a brood of Vipers than his Children. They had proceeded all this while upon a falſe Hypotheſis, about that Righteouſneſs, wherein conſiſted the power and ſubſtance of true Religion and Godlineſs; and upon which the Covenant of God in Chriſt was confirmed to *Abraham*, four

hundred and thirty years before the giving of the Law by *Moſes*, *Gal.* 3. 15, 16. So that unleſs they would now upon means of better information, recant their errours, and recall their miſtakes, and reform their manners; which is indeed to repent; they could not ſecure themſelves from being involved in the common Miſeries, then approaching their Land and Countrey, under *Titus* and *Veſpatian*; or for ever eſcape the damnation of Hell. For the Promiſe that he ſhould be Heir of the world, was not to *Abraham* or to his ſeed through the law, but through the righteouſneſs of faith. *Rom.* 4. 13. Religion is not a Complement, but a real thing; and that righteouſneſs whereby we are righteous in the ſight of God, is not external obedience of the body to inſtituted Righteouſneſs, or poſitive Laws; but internal obedience of the heart, to the Law of Moral goodneſs, and the Dictates of right Reaſon engraven upon the conſcience of every man; *Rom.* 2. 14. Explained and made more evident by the ſeveral Revelations of God, who at ſundry times, and in divers manners, ſpake in times paſt to the Fathers by the Prophets; and in theſe laſt days unto us by his Son, *Heb.* 1. 1. The former, which is our righteouſneſs

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in the ſight of men, and but the ſhadow and carcaſe of Religion; is called a righteouſneſs of our own, which is according to the Law, *Phil.* 3. 9. As being the performance of the letter of the Law, by the act and operation of the body, through mere natural vertue, which is our own. But the latter, which is our righteouſneſs in the ſight of God; is called in the ſame Text, The righteouſneſs which is of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt: Of which words I think my ſelf obliged to give a diſtinct and full account (and that according to the demonſtration of truth to my own Conſcience in the ſight of God;) they being the directions of our preſent life, to a future happineſs; which makes an errour dangerous, and truth to be valued in opening them: then I muſt give ſolution to theſe three Particulars; 1. In what ſence called the righteouſneſs of Faith. 2. Of God. 3. Of God by faith in Jeſus Chriſt. 1. It is called the righteouſneſs of Faith in a double reſpect: 1. As being the moſt proper object of our Belief, ſo to conceive of God, as is moſt agreeable to natural notice, and ſupernatural Revelation. 2. As being the only Principle to the practice of all the Duties and Obligations of the Will of God ſo revealed;

Faith

Faith being the first Principle of all Religion, both natural and revealed; *Heb.* 11. 6. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 2. It is called the righteousness of God, 1. As being the Copy or Image of that righteousness, which God is in himself; of which God himself is the Original and Perfection. 2. As being that righteousness which God only approves, and will reward: *Rom.* 2. 28. He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; nor is Circumcision that which is outward in the flesh, but that which is inward in the heart; whose praise is not of Men, but of God. 3. It is called the Righteousness of God by Faith in Jesus Christ: 1. As to the performance of which, we are assisted by the grace of God, obtained by faith in Jesus Christ (in whose Name, whatsoever we ask, believing, we shall receive) and the grace of the new Covenant consists in these three things; 1. To encline our wills to accept the conditions. 2. Upon our acceptance, to assist our weakness. 3. To accept our sincerity through many defects and imperfections: the integrity of our Wills will so far commute for the deed, that is, for the perfection of obedience to the

that Law of Moral Righteouſneſs in a State of Grace; as whatever pollutions or defilements we may have contracted through the fraud of the Devil, the frailty of the Fleſh, or temptations of the World. So long as our Converſe with bodily Objects, have not altogether ſunk down our ſouls into a vicious love of them, which is the dregs and feculency of ſin and folly; God will accept us upon a ſincere repentance, through the Merit and Righteouſneſs of the Holy Jeſus: the redundancy of whoſe righteouſneſs is to ſupply the defects of a ſincere repentance. 2. As being that righteouſnes, in the purſuance of which in truth, though we cannot in perfection, we can only have confidence of acceptance with God, through Jeſus Chriſt: though we cannot be golden Scepters, we muſt be broken Reeds; though not burning and ſhining Lights, we muſt be ſmoaking Flaxes in his ſight; who will not break the bruiſed reed, nor quench the ſmoaking flax, until judgment be brought forth unto victory. And this is that righteouſneſs of Faith, wherein conſiſts the power and ſubſtance of true Religion and Godlineſs; upon which, as the condition, the Covenant of our reconciliation and happineſs,

was confirmed of God in Christ to *Abraham*, for all Generations; who received the sign of Circumcision, but as the Seal of the righteousness of Faith, (which is the condition of the Covenant) which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the Father of all that believe; that righteousness might be imputed to them also, though they were not circumcised, *Rom.* 4. 11. So that God was in no need of *Abraham*'s Children according to the flesh; but could, without breach of Promise to him (upon their Apostacy and Degeneracy from his faith and righteousness) destroy them all; and out of the obdurate Gentile world, or the very stones, raise up a People to himself, followers of the faith of *Abraham*; to whom, as such, the Promise in Christ did as truly belong, as to the proudest Pharisee or Sadducee of them all. Circumcision was but the sign of the Covenant, not obedience to it; but the profession of Religion, not the practice of it: and for them only to profess and expect the reward, was as preposterous, as if a Servant should demand wages of his Master for wearing of his Livery, and neglecting of his Work. The faith and righteousness of *Abraham* was example for their

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vertue, not expiation of their ſin; and they might as reaſonably have expected to have lived naturally, by vertue of what *Abraham* had eat and drank, without eating and drinking for themſelves, as to live eternally by vertue of that particular act of believing, whereby *Abraham* wrought the works of God, which was counted to him for righteouſneſs; unleſs by the ſame Spirit of Faith, they ſhould work the works of *Abraham* and of God, and thereby work out their own Salvation with fear and trembling: for *Abraham*'s righteouſneſs determined in himſelf, he could thereby but deliver his own ſoul; for God reſpects no man for the goodneſs of another, but every man in the circumſtance of his own integrity: If the Stones, the obdurate Gentiles, the Wild Olives grafted in, will believe and repent, and do the works of *Abraham* upon the hearing of the Goſpel; they ſhall be the Children of *Abraham*, and Heirs according to the Promiſe: and if the Jews, the Natural Branches, continue in their Hardneſs and Unbelief, it ſhall be no privilege to them, that they are the Offſpring of *Abraham* according to the fleſh: *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to ſay within your*

ſelves, we have Abraham to our Father; for I ſay unto you, that God is able of theſe ſtones to raiſe up children unto Abraham.

The Words thus opened, principally imply two Particulars, by way of Motive to Repentance: 1. The Univerſality of the purpoſe of the Grace of God in the Redemption of the world by Jeſus Chriſt; the moſt proper Motive to Repentance againſt Deſpair. 2. The Impartiality of God's Juſtice, in diſtributing Rewards and Puniſhments without reſpect of perſons; (*And think not to ſay within your ſelves, we have Abraham to our Father*) the moſt proper Motive to Repentance againſt carnal ſecurity and preſumption. God is impartially good that none may deſpair, and impartially juſt that none may preſume. 1. God is impartially good: Though the Jews were Iſraelites, to whom appertained the Adoption, and the Glory, and the Covenant, and the giving of the Law, and the Promiſes; whoſe were the Fathers, and of whom, as concerning the Fleſh, Chriſt came, who is God bleſſed for ever, *Rom.* 9. 4. And to whom were committed the Oracles of God, *Rom.* 3. 2. God had not therefore caſt off all care or concern for other Nations; though

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he had left them for ſome time, to walk in their own ways, without the direction of inſtituted Righteouſneſs, or poſitive Laws; yet he did not leave himſelf without Witneſs, in that he did them good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful Seaſons; filling their hearts with food and gladneſs, *Acts* 14. 17. And though the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh, that he might reconcile both Jew and Gentile unto God in one Body by the Croſs, *Epheſ.* 2. 16. And that the Gentiles ſhould be Fellow-Heirs with the Jews of the ſame Body, and partakers together of the Promiſes of Chriſt by the Goſpel, was a Notion that had been for ſome time buried in the dark vault of Nature's Ruines, and long obſcured under the thick veil of *Moſes*'s Law, and by the dark ſayings of the Prophets concerning Chriſt, ſo as St. *Paul*, in his Epiſtles to the *Epheſians* and *Coloſſians*, *Epheſ.* 3. 4, 5. *Coloſſ.* 1. 26. calls it a Myſtery which hath been hid from Ages and Generations: And St. *Peter*, the Miniſter of the Circumciſion and great Apoſtle of the Jews, was firſt warranted by a Viſion from Heaven, *Acts* 10. 28. before he would acknowledge any Grace of God to the Gentiles; yet what was formerly drawn by a dark

dark Coal or Pencil, is now written with a Sunbeam; and there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek, *Rom.* 10. 12. God can be merciful without being partial, just without being cruel, and truly great without designing irrespectively the far greatest part of Mankind, for the Trophies of his Power, in an eternal misery: For, as it follows in the same Text, the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him. God is equally related unto Mankind as the same Lord, he is the God of the spirits of all flesh, *Heb.* 12. 9. And hath made of one Blood all Nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth; and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations: *Acts* 17. 26. His Hands fashioned *Esau* as well as *Jacob*; and consequently obliges his love and care in truth, though not in degree for both: so that those words, *Rom.* 9. 13. *Jacob* have I loved, and *Esau* have I hated, respect not the persons of *Esau* and *Jacob*, but their Posterities; as is evident to all unprejudiced minds, from that place of the Prophet *Malachi*, 1. 1, 2, 3. referred to by the Apostle; the words are, The burden of the Word of the Lord to *Israel* by *Malachi*; I have loved you, saith the Lord, yet

yet ye ſay, wherein haſt thou loved us? Was not *Eſau Jacob*'s Brother, ſaith the Lord? yet I loved *Jacob*, and hated *Eſau*; and laid his Mountains & his Heritage waſte for the Dragons of the Wilderneſs, &c. So that the true meaning of the expreſſions, *Jacob* have I loved, and *Eſau* have I hated, is comparative and gradual with reſpect only to grace and favour, and not at all to ill will or hate; and may be rendred, *Jacob* have I preferred in my favour before *Eſau*, in giving his Poſterity the good Land of *Canaan*, and that of *Eſau*'s the barren Mountains. And that theſe expreſſions were thus uſually underſtood amongſt the Jews, is evident by thoſe words of the ſame Dialect of our Saviour's, *Luke*, 14. 26. If any man come to me, and hate not his Father and Mother, and his own life; Where Hate cannot refer to ill-will properly, but to a leſs degree of love; unleſs we can ſuppoſe our Saviour to cancel the bonds of natural affection, and extinguiſh the common Principles of Nature: And although our common relation unto God, introduce no Anabaptiſtical parity or community in his favours, but *Jacob* have I loved, and *Eſau* have I hated; yet it maintains his good will towards all, and ſecures every man

man from being miſerable, that with hearty repentance and true faith turn unto him. And this is a repreſentation worthy of God and Chriſt, worthy the infinite goodneſs and grace of God, who is not ſtraitned by ſaving a few or many, as if he could ſave no more; who is able to ſave unto the utmoſt all that come unto him in Jeſus Chriſt: for he is a Fountain of Living Water, and can quench the thirſt of all men and creatures without drawing himſelf dry; his goodneſs, like the Sun, enlightens every Star, and influences every Plant, without abatement of his own vertue or light; he is the true *Moſes*'s Buſh, that burns without waſte, warms and enlivens every thing without conſuming or impairing his own heat or beams: and it is a light thing for him (that is, an undervaluing of his Power and Goodneſs) as he ſaith by his Prophet *Iſaiah*, to raiſe up the Tribes of *Jacob*, and reſtore the preſerved of *Iſrael*; therefore have I given him (that is, Chriſt) that he might be for Salvation unto the ends of the Earth: and as they do but eclipſe the glory of the Sun in the Firmament, who reſtrain his light and influence to ſome few Regions and Countreys, and extend them not from the riſing, to the going down

down of the ſame; ſo do they the Riches of the Grace of God, who confine it to a few, and extend it not to Mankind. It is alſo no leſs worthy of the infinite Merit of the Satisfaction of Chriſt; who, by his own Oblation of himſelf once offered upon the Croſs, made a full, perfect and ſufficient Sacrifice, Oblation and Satisfaction, for the ſins of the whole world; and can we deem without ſcandal and imputation to his Satisfaction, the Merit of our Second *Adam* leſs powerful to redeem, than the guilt of the Firſt *Adam* was to captivate and enthral? So that as by the offence of one Judgment came upon all men to Condemnation; ſo by the righteouſneſs of one, the free Gift is come upon all men to juſtification of life, *Rom.* 5. 18.

And as for that Objection, *Rom.* 9. 18. For who hath reſiſted his Will: If God's Will muſt be accompliſhed, and God hath willed the Salvation of all men by Jeſus Chriſt, how comes it to paſs that any periſh?

Be it conſidered for anſwer hereunto, That God hath willed the Salvation of all men by Jeſus Chriſt, through the Conditions of Faith and Repentance; and ſo his Will is unreſiſted in all that are ſaved, and in all that periſh.

Christ died, by the Will of God, for all that believe and repent; but all that believe not, but remain impenitent, perish everlastingly; which is the fault of their own impenitence and infidelity, &c. Nor can our Faith or Infidelity make the Will of God of no effect; and such is the concurrence of God's Grace with every man's Will, who works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure, whereby every man may, if he will, work out his own Salvation with fear and trembling; nor can our acceptance or refusal of his Grace prejudice or lessen his good Will; the neglect or contumely of the Patient, cannot justly derogate from the kindness of the Physician, or Sovereignty of the Remedy; nor are the Riches of God's Grace less in themselves, though multitudes continue poor only because they will not, and despise: And God is still the Saviour of all men, though especially or actually only of them that believe, because he is not really willing that any should perish, but rather that all should come to Repentance; his Nature and Property is always to have mercy, and to forgive all that believe and repent; and he is unwillingly compelled to destroy the Impenitent and Unbelieving; and he is

thirsty.

thirſty after no mans blood, who hath granted unto all Repentance unto Life; and his ways are equal, who leaves every man to inherit his own Choice, and renders to every man according to his works, without reſpect of perſons; which is the next Particular to be diſcuſſed.

For, Although Mercy and Free Grace admitted lapſed Mankind to Conditions of Reconciliation and Reſtitution by Jeſus Chriſt; yet Juſtice exacts the performance of thoſe conditions, and accordingly diſtributes Rewards and Puniſhments: for the Grace of God is a Covenant of Grace, and a Covenant without a Condition, is a Contradiction; and unleſs the Conditions be performed, can it reaſonably be expected there ſhould be any force or vertue in the Obligation. And in this adequate and impartial dealing of God, he regards not the merit of the *Opus operatum*, or or thing done by us, but the Equity and Juſtice of his own Promiſe and Covenant; who hath eſtabliſhed a reward infinitely exceeding the Merit of the Obedience required, either as congruous or condign from the conſideration of the Work wrought; which is but a juſt compliance with the Will of our Lawful

Sovereign, who hath power of Right to impoſe, and it is but our duty to obey; ſo that when we have done all, we are but unprofitable Servants, becauſe we have done no more than was our duty to perform; and whatever is of duty, implies no reward as of Deſert or Merit, but only from that Grace which hath annexed a reward to our duty, to make it our intereſt to obey. So that it is a righteous thing with God, to reward and crown our obedience to his Laws in Chriſt (whence called a Crown of Righteouſneſs) not for the Righteouſneſs of our Work, but his own Promiſe; indeed, what is there in us or our ſervices, worthy that Eternal Happineſs which he hath promiſed, as the reward of of his Grace to a ſincere Repentance, ſince both the Will and the Deed is from his Grace, who works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleaſure, *Philip.* 2. 13. So that after we, through God, having done the will of God; what remains for God to reward in us, but his own Gifts and Graces? *&c.* who renders to every man according to, though not for, his works; and with him is no reſpect of perſons. Evident with reſpect, 1. To the Perfection of his Nature; who is free from all ſuch

Defects

Defects and Imperfections, as are incident to Humane Natures; whereby Judgment is often turned into Gall, and Righteousness into Hemlock; the Wicked are justified, and the Righteous condemned, (both which are alike Abomination to the Lord,) and Justice frequently impartially administred in this Life. Thus is *Saul* spared *Agag*, and the best of the Spoil of the Amalekites, when he should have destroyed them all, out of Covetousness, or Cowardise, or both, 1 *Sam.* 15. 8. Thus *Eli* slightly reproved his Sons, when he should have recompenced their sin with death (which was great before the Lord) through natural fondness, 1 *Sam.* 2. 23. But God is free from all such Weaknesses and Imperfections, and therefore with him is no respect of persons: which will yet more evidently appear, with respect to the Immutability of his Will; who is not as a Man, that he should change, or as the Son of Man, that he should repent; God is free from all such grounds and causes, as render Humane Wills subject to alteration, as Ignorance and Impotence. Men often change their Wills for want of discretion to chuse no better, and for want of a present clear discerning and interview of things. Men are often forced to

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After-games of Prudence, which is the proper Notion of Repentance; but God hath an Intuitive Knowledge, and ſees all things as they are and ſhall be in time from all Eternity.

Men frequently change their wills whether they will or no: the Rational Faculty of the Soul is ſometimes captivated through force and violence; but who can reſiſt his Will, who is Omnipotent, to whom all Nations are as the drop of a Bucket, and as the ſmall duſt of the Ballance? and the concurrent ſtrength of created Power, but as the Withs, wherewith the Philiſtines bound *Sampſon*; as a Thred of Tow, when it toucheth the fire, *&c.*

And as for that Objection which ſome urge againſt the Immutability of the Divine Will, from ſuch Scriptures as ſeem to aſcribe Repentance to God; as, *Joel*, 2. 14. *Jonah*, 3. 10. Who knows if he may repent? be it conſidered that the threatnings of God are conditional; and when not expreſſed, are ever implyed, according to that Maxime of the Prophet *Jeremy*, 18. 7, 8, 9. At what inſtant I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom; to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it: if that Nation, againſt whom

againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, then I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. So that it being the Immutable Will of God to repent of the Evil of Puniſhment upon Man's repenting of the Evil of Sin; *Penitere eſt ſententiam mutare, to repent is but to change his Sentence*, but not the Will, the Will ſtill remaining without variableneſs, or ſhadow of turning: And the immutability of his Will eſtabliſheth the truth of his diſtributing Rewards and Puniſhments, according to every man's work, without reſpect of perſons; and that he regards not the Perſons of men, but the performance of the Conditions, upon which he hath eſtabliſhed the Covenant of our Reconciliation and Happineſs by Jeſus Chriſt.

The proper Inferences now, from this Diſcourſe are,

Firſt, Encouragement; and Secondly, Caution.

Firſt, Encouragement for every man to make good his Intereſt in the Common Salvation: Indeed, who would ſweat in the Exerciſe of Grace, and bleed in Conflict with Sin, if after he hath done the Will of God, he

muſt

muſt remain uncertain whether he ſhall inherit the Promiſe. This is that detains the Devils in Impenitence, who believe and tremble, *James*, 2. 19. becauſe they are reſerved in everlaſting Chains under Darkneſs, to the Judgment of the Laſt Day, *Jude*, 6. But though Chriſt took not on him the Nature of Angels, he hath of the Seed of *Abraham*; and all that do the Works of *Abraham*, are the Children of *Abraham*, and Heirs according to the Promiſe. Then let no man ſay with thoſe in *Jeremy*, 18. 12. There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and every man do the imagination of his evil heart: But let the Wicked forſake his way, and the Unrighteous man his thoughts; and turn unto God, for he is gracious; and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon: And let every man work out his own Salvation with fear and trembling; leſt a Promiſe being left, any man ſeem to come ſhort of it, *&c.*

Secondly, Caution: 1 *Pet.* 1. 17. Since we call on the Father; who, without reſpect of perſons, judgeth according to every man's work, to paſs the time of our ſojourning here in fear; and repoſe no more confidence of ſecurity from Succeſſion from Holy men, than

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as we are followers of their Faith and Virtues; nor in the ſtrict and zealous performance of all inſtituted Righteouſneſs and poſitive Laws, then as they are productive of the main end of purifying our hearts by faith; renewing us in the Spirit of our minds, and cloathing us with that New Man, which after God, is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs; and the end of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good Conſcience, and Faith unfeigned, 1*Tim.*1.5. And, as it follows, the Law (that is, Poſitive Law) is not for a righteous man, in whom the Law of Nature lives; and can perform the τὰ τῦ νόμε, the Dictates of it, without the help of outward Laws: for the deſign of all inſtituted Righteouſneſs, and poſitive Laws, is but to conform us to the Duties and Obligations of the Law of Moral Righteouſneſs; and all obedience to them is no farther acceptable, than as it is inſtrumental and ſerviceable to that great purpoſe. And God is ſo far from being pleaſed with the performance of Inſtituted Righteouſneſs in the guilt of Immoralities, as it is the great aggravation of his diſpleaſure and indignation; *Iſa.* 1. 11. To what purpoſe is the multitude of your Sacrifices? bring no more vain Oblati-

ons, your hands are full of blood: *Isaiah*, 66. 3. He that kills an Ox, is as if he slew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dog's neck; he that offers an Oblation, as if he offered Swine's blood; he that burneth Incense, as if he blessed an Idol; whilst they have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their Abominations, *&c.* And what-ever Veneration these righteous men in the Text had for themselves, for tything Mint, Annice, and Cummin; but neglecting the weightier things of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith; for making clean the outside of the Cup and Platter, remaining within full of Extortion and Excess; making long Prayers to devour Widows Houses: Our Saviour esteems no better of them than whited Sepulchres, which appear beautiful to the eye, but within are full of rottenness and dead men's bones: let our care be then to be really what we appear; not having a Form of Godliness, denying the Power: and let every man that names the Name of Christ, depart from all Iniquity; for bodily Exercise profits little, but Godliness hath the Promise of this life, and that that is to come.

This is that Law of Perfection; which it is the

the design of all positive Laws to advance and propagate, as the Promulgation of the Decalogue, and the Institution of the Gospel; which is so far from being a relaxation to Moral Duty, as it is the greatest help and obligation to promote it, upon a twofold account;

First, As the most clear and manifest Revelation of Truth; The Law came by *Moses*, but Grace and Truth by Jesus Christ: The Law was Truth in obscure Types and Shadows, but the Gospel is Truth in its own Image and Likeness: and the clearer and more manifestly any Law is promulged, the greater and more forcible is its Obligation; *Acts*, 17. 35. The time of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commands all men every where to repent.

Secondly, As the most clear evidence of the truth and certainty of a future life after this, the main Argument of the Gospel being the truth and certainty of the Resurrection of Christ from the dead, in the truth and substance of Humane Nature, and in the Circumstances of Life and Immortality, to die no more; 2 *Tim.* 1. 9. Who hath abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light, through the Gospel. The Summary

Article of which is to confeſs with our mouths the Lord Jeſus, and believe in our hearts that God hath raiſed him from the dead, *Rom.* 10. 10. God hath been pleaſed to give many inſtances of his Power, in raiſing the Dead by his Prophets under the Law, and by Chriſt and his Apoſtles under the Goſpel; which are ſtrong Inferences of the poſſibility of a Reſurrection: but becauſe all that were raiſed from the dead (till Chriſt) dyed again, and he only lives to die no more. His being ſo raiſed is the only aſſurance, as the Firſt Fruits of a full Harveſt of a future Reſurrection and Judgment; when every man ſhall riſe again with his own Body, to receive according to what he hath done in the Fleſh, whether good or evil: and the belief of this is the moſt (if not only) powerful Motive to Moral Goodneſs; for if there be no Reſurrection, it is a Natural Inference, Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die. But if there be a Reſurrection, it is equally rational to infer: herein let us exerciſe our ſelves continually, to have always a Conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards man. The Jews were generally governed by the hope and fear of Reward and Puniſhment only in this life; and generally look-

looked for a Temporal *Meſſiah*, to deliver them from the bondage of the Roman Tyranny, and to give them great temporal Peace and Proſperity: and becauſe Chriſt came in the weakneſs and poverty of a Servant, and they expected him in the pomp and power of a Sovereign, they owned him not for their *Meſſiah*, but to this day look for another; the which their Errours and Miſpritions, were the Genuine Off-ſpring of their ignorance and uncertainty of a Future State. And the Sadducees, a great and learned Party amongſt them, ſaid there is no Reſurrection, neither Angel nor Spirit. And though the Gentiles (at leaſt ſome of their wiſe men and Philoſophers) aſſerted and believed the Immortality of the Soul, yet they were all uncertain, if not altogether in unbelief, of the Reſurrection of the Body: that theſe *Mola*'s of fleſh and blood ſhould put on Incorruption, and be cloathed with Immortality; which is the only clear Revelation of the Goſpel, and the moſt powerful Argument to all the Duties and Obligations of Moral Righteouſneſs, &c.

The Jews went into Captivity under *Shiſack* King of *Egypt*, and *Nebuchadnezzar* King of *Babel*; and at laſt, were deſolate under *Ti-*

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tus and *Veſpatian*, with the Temple of the Lord in their mouths, and the ſign of Circumciſion in their fleſh, and *Abraham* to their Father. And if God ſpared not the Natural Branches, it is fair warning to the Wild Olives grafted in not to be high minded, but fear; not to truſt to the outward Privileges of the due Adminiſtration of the Word and Sacraments, or external obedience to Inſtituted Righteouſneſs, and poſitive Laws, without cleanſing themſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God; for it is not that that goes in, but that that comes out, that defiles a man: Good and Evil properly conſiſts not in the external act and operation of the Body, but in the inward habit and diſpoſition of the mind; whence it is, that love is the fulfilling of the Law; and conſequently, Hate, the tranſgreſſion of it: ſo that he that loves his Neighbour as himſelf, is his preſerver; and he that hates him in his heart, is his murtherer; though neither ever have power or opportunity actuallay either to ſave or to deſtroy. Charity is not properly to relieve them that want, but to love God above all, and our Neighbour as our ſelves; nor Martyrdome every dying, but dying for the

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love of God and Truth; 1 *Cor.* 13. 3. And though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing: *Joh.* 4. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and in truth: *Optimus animus pulcherrimus Dei cultus*, Seneca; *He worſhips God beſt, who hath the beſt mind.* God bears reſpect to *Abel* and to his Offering. That Holocauſt and Oblation which ſmokes from the Altar of a devoted heart to God (for the Altar ſanctifies the Gift) bears our acceptable Odour; otherwiſe we are but like Vaults, that ſound merely from their hollowneſs, *&c.*

External Profeſſion of the beſt Religion, Outward Communion with the beſt Church, ſuch as the Jewiſh once was, and the Chriſtian now is; cannot ſecure or privilege from the ſtorms of Divine Vengeance, without the true belief, and neceſſary practice of Truth and Holineſs, *&c.*

And ſince we have the Profeſſion of the beſt Religion, and live in Communion with one of the beſt Churches this day in the world (which happineſs God grant us long to enjoy, under the protection, and in the long life and

proſperity

prosperity of our most religious and gracious Sovereign) (and may it ever be the Blessing to us, and our Posterities for all Generations) that therein we may effectually save our souls from death, and hide the multitude of our sins: may it please God so to assist us with his Grace, as that in the firm belief of all her Principles, & in the uniform practice of all her Duties and Obligations, we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all Godliness and Honesty; that being holy, and humble, and undefiled, the Children of God without rebuke, we may at last, together with all those that are departed this world in the true Faith, and fear of God, be made partakers of the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord Jesus: To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit; three Persons, and one God, of the same Substance, Power and Eternity; be given of us, all Angels, all Men, and all Creatures, all possible Honour and Glory, Praise and Dominion, Power and Thanksgiving, Fear, Adoration and Obedience, now and for ever. *Amen.*

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